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C O N F I D E N T I A L ABUJA 001683

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/FO, AF/W, INR/AA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/31/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [NI](#) [PHUM](#) [UN](#) [UNHRC](#)
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: DEMARCHE DELIVERED ON HUMAN RIGHTS
COUNCIL 12TH SESSION PRIORITIES

REF: SECSTATE 93358

Classified By: Political Counselor James P. McNulty
for reasons in Sections 1.4 (B) and (D)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Staff from the Bureaus of International Organizations (IO) and Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) met in Abuja on September 8 with Nigeria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) to discuss resolutions, especially on Freedom of Expression (FOE), to be presented at the upcoming 12th session of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) in Geneva. The following day, POLOFF delivered additional demarche points not covered in the original meeting. Our MFA contact said African states "write with a common pen" in multilateral fora, but asserted Nigeria does not always vote in unison with other African governments. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Visitors from DRL/IO met in Abuja September 8 with MFA Director of International Organizations Department, Ambassador M. K. Ibrahim, and his deputy, John Gana. The delegation concentrated on the freedom of expression resolution, pointing out key new paragraphs. The foreign ministry welcomed the U.S. initiative, and commented that if we had Egypt, Pakistan, and Nigeria's support we "should have no problems passing the resolution by consensus." The deputy, speaking with some passion, thanked the U.S. delegation for raising this issue and offered his view that the issue of religion and expression is threatening to "tear the Human Rights Council down the middle," and force it to go the way of the Commission on Human Rights.

¶3. (C) On September 9, POLOFF followed up with Deputy Gana to raise additional points from reftel. On the Colombia-Mexico resolution regarding discriminatory laws against women, Gana raised concerns due to cultural sensitivities in Nigeria. He stated if the proposed language includes any prohibition of the family choosing a woman's husband for her, that would be unacceptable to Nigeria for traditional and cultural reasons. He noted Nigeria would reserve support on this issue until review of the specific language.

¶4. (C) Deputy Gana expressed no concerns over the Somalia extension sponsored by Sweden, nor any problem over the

Cambodia extension. He reserved opinion on the Burundi initiative, indicating Nigeria would have to hear directly from Burundi. Gana concurred that the Russian resolution on traditional values was not specific enough to merit support at this time. He said Nigeria would reserve opinion until the definition is clarified and they determine that it does not undermine universal human rights.

15. (C) Deputy Gana noted that African states prefer to work together, achieve consensus, and "write with a common pen" in multi-lateral fora. He asserted that Nigeria doesn't always vote in unison with other African governments, but tries to whenever possible.

COMMENT

16. (C) Nigeria's well-versed MFA international organization representatives were pleased that our DRL and IO visitors recognized Nigeria's HRC chairmanship and turned what began as a frosty reception into a meeting that ended on a positive and mutually supportive note. END COMMENT.
MCCULLOUGH